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Promise Keepers Catholic males taking notice, joining crusade

MINNEAPOLIS (CNS) — A Christian crusade that is drawing men to cheer for Jesus Christ in the stadiums where they usually cheer for their local sports team is attracting Catholic attention and participation. In the Minneapolis and Seattle areas, where Promise Keepers held conferences earlier in July, Catholics have become active in the group and its mission to promote spiritual revival in America — a revival that is beginning to make inroads into the Rochester diocese as well (please see related story).

Steve Jenkins, a Catholic member of the Community of Saint Joseph in West St. Paul, Minn., and the Promise Keepers' field representative for Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Wisconsin, recalls thinking as he watched the seventh game of the 1991 World Series at the Metrodome in Minneapolis: "Wouldn't this be great to fill with people praising God?"

Some 25,000 did just that July 14-15 for a Promise Keepers "Raise the Standard" conference at the Metrodome, one of 15 scheduled in stadiums around the country from April to October this year.

Jenkins told the *Catholic Bulletin*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, that he became involved after attending a 1992 Promise Keepers conference in Boulder, Colo., where the group is based.

The interdenominational men's ministry was started in 1990 by Bill McCartney, former football coach at the University of Colorado, and Dave Wardell.

The first conference in 1991 drew 4,200 men. In 1994, more than 280,000 men attended such conferences, and this year's series is expected to draw 500,000. Although organizers said the event's date has not yet been set, a rally next year in Washington, D.C. is expected to draw a million men to the nation's capital.

Meanwhile, a small-scale Promise Keepers-type event with a Catholic focus drew some 640 men — including some men from the Rochester

diocese — to the Franciscan University at Steubenville July 7-9. Participants at the "Christian Men's Conference" were told that selfishness rooted in sin is the key to all marital problems.

"The reason our marriages have conflict, the reason for every marital breakup is a selfishness which is the opposite of self-giving, and at the root of that is sin," said Steve Wood, founder of the Family Life Center in Fort Charlotte, Fla. "We're to love our wives as Christ loved the church."

SEVEN COMMITMENTS:

- 1. Honor Jesus Christ through worship, prayer, and obedience to his Word.
- 2. Pursue vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that a man needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
- 3. Practice spiritual, moral, ethical, and sexual purity.
- 4. Build strong marriages and families.
- 5. Support the mission of the church by honoring and praying for one's pastor and by actively giving of one's time and resources.
- 6. Reach beyond racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
- 7. Influence the world by being obedient to the Great Commandment (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

adding that true masculinity is, "a man who has given his heart and life to Jesus Christ."

Other speakers at the conference included Tom Monaghan, founder and chairman of the board for Domino's Pizza; Jim Berlucchi, executive director of Legatus, an organization of Catholic business leaders; and Rick Strom, a backup quarterback for the Buffalo Bills.

Jenkins said the response to the Promise Keepers movement, "demonstrates the level of hunger of men to have a relationship with God."

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Diocesan men laud emphasis on active role in faith, family

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

For his 20th wedding anniversary, Michael McCaig received a surprise from his wife and his boss.

The two "conspired" to have Michael return to Painted Post a day early from a trip he and Marie had taken to mark their milestone, ostensibly because he was needed at work.

Instead, the Corning-Painted Post Roman Catholic Community parishioner discovered that his wife had arranged for him to take part in the Christian Men's Conference at Ohio's University of Steubenville July 7-9. The retreat was a Catholic-centered gathering modeled on the Promise Keepers conferences, focusing on men's relationships with Christ and their taking active roles in church and family.

Although he was somewhat familiar with what Promise Keepers represented based on conversations he had with a co-worker who attended one of the movement's conferences, McCaig acknowledged that he was at first apprehensive about attending a men's-only retreat.

But McCaig recalled how he was impressed by the speakers and how he found himself inspired by the event's presentations and testimonies. Indeed, he is now hoping to organize a group from the Corning-Painted Post area to attend next year's gathering in Steubenville.

"He never would do anything like this on his own, and I knew he would be touched by the weekend," Marie McCaig observed. And since he has come home, she added, she has seen signs that the retreat has affected him.

"He can't stop talking about it," Marie observed. "I can see he was touched and inspired. I see him wanting to be more assertive in his role as a father."

McCaig was one of a number of men from the diocese who attended the Steubenville retreat. Meanwhile, Don Miner of Mendon's Church of the Transfiguration attended a May 26-27 Promise Keepers conference in Washington, D.C. That gathering attracted 52,000 men to RFK Stadium, normally used as the home of the National Football League's Washington Redskins.

One of Miner's sons encouraged him to attend the Washington rally, he said. In fact, he ended up attending the rally with three of his sons, and one of his son's father-in-law. The senior Miner was impressed by what he witnessed.

"When you get a stadium full of guys singing and praising God, that's quite an experience," he said.

Miner said he was so impressed with the rally that he signed up for the retreat in Steubenville, where he was joined by several fellow parishioners, including Deacon Larry

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